We Are Fortunate

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We Are Fortunate

by TigerPrawn

Summary

A chance meeting changes the course of two lives.

Notes

Just a quick note on dates/timeline. This fic is set post canon for Joe but pre canon for Le Chiffre, so essentially Casino Royale would be set a few years later rather than in 2006.

“Why did you leave us,” she asked him softly, no anger there, which perhaps made it harder.

He hesitated, choking on the words and unsure how to answer but to tell the horrible and despicable truth, “I was afraid to die.”

“We are fortunate, all this time we’ve been given, we must use it well.”

Joe was awoken by his own screams. He sat up, drenched in sweat and shaking. It was strange how that conversation with Marie inspired the same dread and terror in him as his actual experiences in Rwanda.

It was the guilt, he knew. The guilt he had barely been living with since leaving Rwanda, and Marie’s visit had brought it all back and then some. There was nothing he could do to reverse

time and stay, and even if he had, what would he have done? He'd just be another corpse.

That didn't stop his mind telling him that that was exactly what he should have done if he had any integrity. He should have stayed, just as Father Christopher had.

It wasn't that simple, of course it wasn't. But emotions rarely took the nuance of a situation into account.

The least he could do was try to make amends. He had hidden away for so many years. Teaching and trying to convince himself there was something noble in that. So now he did this instead, something not remotely noble and lacking in all integrity.

Joe got up from the bed in the airport hotel and went to the shower, standing under the warm water until he felt clean again. Of sweat at least.

We must use it well.

Joe drew a sharp breath and turned off the water, wrapping a towel around his waist before he went back to the bedroom and looked at the time. The harshly lit numbers of the bedside clock read a little before 2am.

He dried himself off and slipped into some clean clothes, a casual t-shirt and jeans, before he grabbed his wallet and keycard and made his way down to the bar.

The good thing about hotels at airports is that the bars are always open. People could be coming or going at all times of the day and night, and a number of them would want drinks or perhaps bar snacks.

It was quiet for the most part. A table full of merrily drunk businessmen sat in a corner booth and there was a woman sitting at the very other end of the bar, but that was it. So Joe took a seat and ordered a drink. A whiskey.

He wasn't sure when he'd acquired a taste for it. Beer had always been his drink of choice, even the local stuff they had in Kigali, which a lot of the Europeans detested. But since he'd come home, whiskey had increasingly taken its place to the point of exclusivity.

At least whiskey helped him sleep. Sometimes.

"A nightcap or an early start?" A smooth, masculine voice asked, making Joe look up at the man who now stood beside him. He blinked, unsure why this stranger was talking to him.

Joe didn't have chance to answer before the man was flagging down the server and sliding onto the stool next to him.

"Oh, um… nightcap, I guess." Joe answered when the man's expectant gaze fell on him. He was all sharp angles and slicked hair. His suit was notably expensive, but it was the scar through the man's milky eye that set him apart. Joe was sure he'd never seen someone so distinguishable before in his life.

Joe cleared his throat, realising he was staring as the man ordered his drink. “How about you?”

“I’m in between flights, my body no longer knows what time zone it is in, so I think technically it is happy hour. Somewhere at least.” He passed his credit card across the bar and then picked up his drink and held it up in salute to Joe.

His smile was charming and Joe found it enticing. Not just the smile, the enigmatic man in general, and the chance he was offering Joe for a distraction for as long as they conversed.

When silence fell for little more than a moment, Joe reached desperately for conversation.

“Are you travelling for business?” Joe asked, noting the man’s suit, and when he inclined his head Joe continued, “what do you do?”

The man smirked, clearly enjoying Joe’s attention, the realisation of which made Joe blush.

“Jean,” the man said, holding out his hand.

Joe shook himself from his reverie and took the man’s hand, shaking it firmly, as he supplied “Joe.”

After a moment they released each other’s hands and Jean relaxed back on his stool.

“I provide private banking services,” Jean’s words were a low rumble and Joe could see how his slick style and black on black aesthetic suited someone in high end finance. “And you?”

“I’m a teacher,” Joe replied, picking up his glass and swigging back the whiskey.

“Not travelling for business then,” Jean assumed aloud. “A conference, perhaps?”

“I’m not… Um…” Joe felt his cheeks heat. He’d never told anyone about this before, what he does with his weekends. But he found himself strangely compelled now that the opportunity arose. “I’m not flying.”

“No?” Jean signalled for refills and left his card on the bar, then turned to quirk an eyebrow at Joe.

“No. It’s just something… Something I started doing. I was meant to fly. A few months ago. I quit my job and I volunteered with an aid group. I was set to fly to their headquarters in South Africa and then on from there, helping deliver aid. Had the tickets…” Joe trailed off and took a swallow of the whiskey that had been placed in front of him.

“You changed your mind?”

Joe shook his head, “I couldn’t do it. I was… I was in Rwanda, at the start of the genocide. And I didn’t do anything, I couldn’t save anyone, only myself. I wanted to make up for that, do some good. But then I got to the airport and I was scared. I was so utterly terrified that I froze. I loved Rwanda, Kigali, the community there, the people. And when I think about going back to Africa all I can see is their faces. All I can think about is the people I knew and

how they are all dead. I can't do that again, can't fall in love with another community and then--" Joe was cut off by the tightness of his throat.

As he tried to keep his breathing level, a gentle hand settled on his knee and squeezed, comforted.

"So you come here to watch the planes leave without you. To torture yourself." Jean noted, no emotion either way.

Joe went to shake his head then stopped. Because he really was torturing himself. He told himself every time that this was the time he would head to the airport in the morning and buy a ticket. Just get on a plane and go. But as he watched the planes fly over the hotel, he felt sick to the pit of his stomach, gripped by fear.

"I'm a coward," Joe muttered quietly.

"No," Jean protested, a brow raised as he hooked a finger under Joe's chin and made him look up to him. "You witnessed atrocities, you feared for your life. It isn't cowardly to want to avoid death."

"Not even when I ran away? When I could have stayed and helped?" Joe protested, his voice breaking over the words.

Jean shook his head, "Could you really? If you had stayed you would have just been another dead body, no?"

Joe swallowed, tears stinging the corners of his eyes.

Who was this man? How did he see into his soul like this?

"Would you like a distraction?" Jean asked in a low rumble, one finger still under Joe's chin as his other hand slid up Joe's thigh.

Joe shuddered, his mouth too dry to speak. He nodded.

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"That feels so good…" Joe muttered, slightly buzzed from the drinks but even more so from the pleasure he was sinking into.

Jean had two fingers moving inside him, thrusting so slowly that it was barely a thrust at all. And the whole while he kissed and nuzzled at Joe's throat and then down to his chest, brushing his lips lightly over Joe's nipple until he was arching off the bed.

His mind was utterly blank other than the here and now, the feeling of the hard naked body next to his own in the soft, cloud-like bed. He felt swallowed whole by it all and was grateful for it.

"Oh fuck!" Joe cried out and writhed as Jean stroked over his prostate.

“There it is,” Jean crooned the words at Joe’s reaction, repeating the motion as Joe started to feel like partially set jelly released from the mould, spreading out across the bed like so much goo.

“Oh god…” Joe muttered. “I think my soul might leave my body.” His words were slurred with pleasure and he loved hearing the tinkle of laughter from Jean in response.

“Not before something else does, I hope.” With that Jean moved further down, nuzzling at the crease of Joe’s thigh, his cock heavy against Jean’s cheek. As he throbbed with want, Jean pressed his nose against his cock, and then his lips, slowly mouthing at him as he continued to move his fingers.

With every movement, Joe writhed and moaned. When he’d had sex before, with either men or women, it had seemed a little perfunctory on their part and usually he was the one getting them off. It seemed to be part of his nature - the desire to please. No one had ever done this for him before. Allowed him to be taken care of and, yes, so thoroughly distracted.

Joe shuddered as Jean took him into his mouth, swirling his tongue around the head before slowly sucking him down. Reflexively, Joe moved his hand down to cup the back of Jean’s head, playing with the less coiffed hair there, but stopping himself from guiding Jean’s actions.

Jean hummed, and the sensation sent shivers all over Joe’s body, and increasingly Jean was moving his fingers with the same pace as his sucking. Still gentle and tender, there was an increased urgency and Joe’s body reacted accordingly. He moaned as he rode Jean’s fingers, trying not to fuck into his mouth and break the rythym that Jean had set.

Instead he relaxed into it, letting Jean do what he wanted and enjoy the results.

“C-close…” Joe was able to warn as Jean started to suck him harder and purposefully massage his prostate.

Jean simply hummed in response, acknowledging Joe’s words but changing nothing about his actions until Joe’s body was thrumming, shaking and then convulsing as he came harder than he could ever remember doing so before, spilling down Jean’s throat.

Jean continued to suck him, easing into a gentler motion, working him slowly down from the high. His mouth was soft and his fingers light until Joe whimpered and he finally pulled back, removing his fingers from Joe and kissing back up his chest.

“Oh my god…” Joe panted, barely able to get the words out as he tried to catch his breath. His cock was still twitching with aftershocks of the climax and his body shaking as Jean settled next to him and stroked his hand softly up and down his chest.

“I enjoyed that very much,” Jean purred next to his ear and then lightly kissed him, not deeply but enough to be able to taste his own release.

“Mm, me too…” Joe murmured against Jean’s lips. “I should--” He moved, trying to roll onto his side and slip his hand to Jean’s hard cock, but Jean stopped him.

“No, not tonight.” Jean kissed him again. “I think you need to rest, just let yourself feel nothing but the pleasure.” He eased Joe back against the pillows. “I’m more of a morning person anyway.”

Joe felt the curve of Jean’s lips against his neck and relaxed back, feeling for at least a little while, completely free.

He drifted into a peaceful sleep.

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Joe woke and realised immediately he wasn’t in his own room. Instead of the basic room he’d paid for, he was in a clearly expensive suite. In Jean’s bed.

For a moment Joe stretched out, enjoying the luxurious bed, before guilt hit him as it always did. Every morning without fail.

“Yes, thank you.”

Joe heard Jean’s voice and then the click of the room phone being placed back on the hook. Then the bed dipped and Jean was next to him once more.

“Room service will be up shortly, but I hope you’ll stay a little longer?” Jean murmured the words and placed his lips against Joe’s throat.

Joe let out a shaky breath, his throat tight. He felt gripped by the guilt that pleasure and happiness brought him.

“What is it?” Jean asked, pulling back to look at Joe with an intensity he wasn’t expecting.

“I guess I can only escape life for so long.” Joe murmured.

Jean went to say something and then stopped, hesitating. He seemed conflicted.

“Jean?” Joe asked, tracing his finger down Jean’s scarred cheek.

“In Uganda I have a business deal awaiting me. An investor in a sense.” Jean cleared his throat, “in the sense that I planned to take money entrusted to me and play the stock market. A game that I know has been rigged.”

“That doesn’t…” Joe frowned and sat up. “That doesn’t really sound legit.”

“No,” Jean agreed. “Do you believe in fate?”

Joe thought for a moment and frowned, “I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

Jean shook his head, “no, I don’t think I do either. But you see, I find myself at a crossroads in life.”

He lay back onto the pillows and drew Joe to him. It felt good and comfortable, when he was sure it should feel strange as they had barely known each other for twelve hours.

“My flight is later today.”

“But?” Joe prompted, sensing there was more to come.

“I don’t think I want to go. I’ve been thinking about it for a while. Reflective. When I was a child I was a chess prodigy. I have a mind for numbers, and somewhere along the line…” Jean trailed off.

“You went down a bad path.”

“Yes, and I’ve done bad things. Hearing you speak yesterday was strange to me. I’ve always closed myself off to the consequences. Hearing you talk about the bad things you’ve experienced…”

They lapsed into silence.

“You want to save someone, Joe. I think you’ve saved me.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Joe looked at him, expecting Jean to be teasing him. “We’ve only just met…”

“Plenty of strangers have touched your life.” Jean said, gently stroking Joe’s cheek.

“What are you going to do?” Joe asked, leaning into the touch.

“I’m going to miss my flight.” Jean said, pulling Joe closer until their lips were almost touching. “I’m going to be too busy.”

Joe smiled. He didn’t fully know the significance of it all, he wasn’t sure he wanted to know all the details. But he did feel lighter, the guilt did feel lessened knowing that he had made a difference to this one person no matter what happened next.

Joe closed the distance between them and their lips met.

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